



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

**3-THROW ME** — Mark Mitchum, member of First Baptist Church, Panama City, Fla., stands on a street corner ‘three throwing,’ the three-finger gesture he came up with as a symbol for the Trinity.

## ‘Three throwing’ Florida nurse creates Christian gesture symbolizing Trinity

The idea is deceptively simple: Stand on a street corner and hold up three fingers.

It’s just the idea that First Baptist Church, Panama City, Fla., member Mark Mitchum had after recognizing the lack of a clearly defined, unmistakable hand gesture for Christians.

“I came up with the idea while driving around,” said Mitchum, a 1995 graduate of the University of Mobile school of nursing and a registered nurse in a cardiac lab in Panama City. “I would see lots of Christian symbols, like the cross, fish or dove or even a clever bumper sticker or two, and would think, ‘Hey, that’s cool; they’re Christians but what do they know about me?’”

He chose the three-finger gesture as a symbol of the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While researching Christian gestures, Mitchum said he found “nothing in mainstream pop culture to mean ‘Christian.’” Other than the “W” in sign language, the three-finger symbol didn’t have another national meaning in popular culture.

That is until now. Mitchum is on a mission to spread the symbol, also known as “three throwing,” among the Christian community.

First, Panama City, Senior Pas-

tor Craig Conner said, “Mark has given the body of Christ a simple, yet meaningful, symbol for encouraging one another as we are walking in the world. A simple ‘three throw’ reminds us who we are and challenges us to fight the good fight of faith.”

Mitchum hopes to see three throwing used to promote fellowship and community among followers of Christ whether in “traffic, ballgames, concerts, photos or anywhere the Word can’t be heard.”

In order to raise awareness of the symbol, he created a video titled “Three Throw the Trinity Christian Hand Sign!,” which shows it in action at a busy intersection. In addition,

Mitchum has given out thousands of bumper stickers depicting the sign. He said the sticker can serve as an invitation to another believer to connect with you.

### Convenient icebreaker

Mitchum also hopes the symbol can stir the curiosity of non-believers and act as a convenient icebreaker for those outside the Christian community to ask questions and create dialogue.

“I think this expression of our faith has the potential to sweep across the nation and world,” said Bruce Raley, national educa-

tion ministry leader with LifeWay Christian Resources and former teaching pastor of First, Panama City. “This simple sign is a means to let others know of our faith and life in Jesus Christ. There is encouragement in knowing that others in our community are Christians and not ashamed to proclaim so.”

Matthew 18:20 serves as the inspiration for three throwing, reading, “For where two or three are gathered together, I am there in the midst of them.” Mitchum encourages believers to “gather together in corporate fellowship” to lift up Christ and promote a sense of Christian unity.

Easy as it may be, there’s a deeper purpose to three throwing than just holding up three fingers. It’s a matter of glorifying the name of Jesus in a creative, unconventional way.

“There is just something different, eternity-centered and all-completing about helping initiate and establish a way for ... the King of the universe to be exalted in more places and by more people than before,” Mitchum said.

It’s a simple effort that could go a long way.

“What we as Christians did for the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, will be the only true criteria for any effort worth remembering and celebrating,” Mitchum said.

For more information or to receive a Trinity sticker, e-mail [info@threethrow.com](mailto:info@threethrow.com) or visit [www.threethrow.com](http://www.threethrow.com). (UMobile)

## Religion In America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Clergy ethics, morals judged average, survey shows

WASHINGTON — What do nurses, soldiers, pharmacists, elementary school teachers, doctors and police officers have in common?

Americans say they are all more ethical and honest than members of the clergy, according to a Gallup survey released Dec. 3.

Slightly more than half of Americans (53 percent) rate the moral values of priests, ministers and other clerics as “very high” or “high.”

That percentage is a slight bump from 2009, when only 50 percent of Americans said men and women of the cloth are ethical paragons, the lowest number in Gallup’s more than 30 years of measuring professional reputations.

Before the Roman Catholic clergy sexual abuse scandal erupted in 2002, two-thirds of Americans had regularly approved of ministers’ morals, according to Gallup.

“Stability is generally the norm in Americans’ ratings of the honesty and ethics of professions, but Americans’ opinions do shift in response to real-world events, mostly scandals, that reflect poorly on a profession,” Gallup said.

A third of Americans this year said the clergy’s morals are “average,” and 8 percent rated them “poor,” according to the survey.

Bringing up the bottom of the professional ethics list were lobbyists, car sales people and members of Congress.

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted Nov. 19–21, with a random sample of 1,037 adults, ages 18 and older. The margin of error is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

### Ground Zero church starts legal action to rebuild

NEW YORK — Nearly two years after negotiations abruptly ended over where a Greek Orthodox church destroyed on 9/11 may rebuild, legal action has begun against several agencies and officials involved in the Ground Zero land dispute.

Until talks broke off in early 2008, leaders from St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and Ground Zero developers had reached a preliminary agreement to rebuild on a larger piece of property at 130 Liberty Street, allowing the original 155 Cedar Street lot to be used for a vehicle security center.

Under the deal — either binding or tentative, depending on which side you ask — the church also would get \$20 million towards its rebuilding costs, which include enhanced security requirements for the Ground Zero area.

In a statement released by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the agency blames the tiny church’s escalating demands for the 2008 stalemate and reiterated that it supports “the return of the church to its original home” on Cedar Street.

But church leaders insist the old lot is unsuitable and that years of planning already have gone into the new site. Now both sites are under heavy construction — neither with the church’s permission, said Mark Arey, spokesman for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

“We’ve spent a year and a half trying to reach out to the Port Authority, but they still haven’t spoken to us directly,” he said.

“There has been no phone call, no telegram, no fax, nothing.”

### Friends at church seem to be key to happiness

WASHINGTON — Close friendships among congregants rather than theology seem to be the key to happiness among religious people, according to a new study.

One-third of Americans who attend religious services weekly and have three to five close friends in the congregation said they are “extremely satisfied” with their lives.

In comparison, only one in five Americans who attend services weekly but have no close friends in the congregation said they are extremely satisfied.

“In short, ‘sitting alone in the pew’ does not enhance one’s life satisfaction,” conclude authors Chaeyoon Lim of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Robert D. Putnam of Harvard University in a December article in the *American Sociological Review*.

“Only when one forms social networks in a congregation does religious service attendance lead to a higher level of life satisfaction.”

The findings are from the Faith Matters Survey of U.S. adults, which included 3,108 people in 2006 and 1,915 in 2007.